

MINUTES

BOARD OF GOVERNORS, BG-129

Date: Wednesday 28 June 2023

Time: 1500

Location: CA105/6, Catalyst, Leek Rd

Notes:

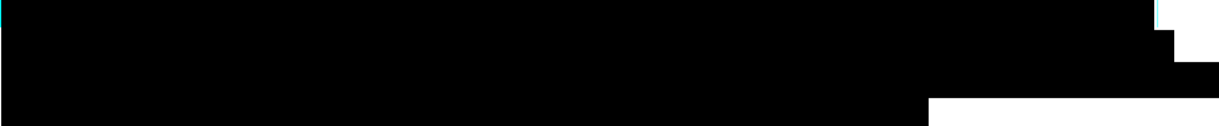
1. *Items marked with an asterisk (starred items) are for information only or regarded as noncontentious. Starred items will not be discussed and will be assumed to have been noted or approved unless a request to unstar a named item is received from a Board member in advance, or at the commencement, of the meeting.*
2. *Items classified as Confidential, and their subsequent minutes, will be redacted before publication of the agenda and minutes on the University's public website.*

1430 – 1500: A Know Your Business session from Sally McGill, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy Chief Executive on developing an Environmental, Societal and Governance (ESG) Framework, which then appears later on the agenda as part of the Sustainability Update.

Chief Financial Officer, Sally McGill gave an overview of the ESG framework, how this had been developed and how this would inform future reporting within the University. The Board of Governors commended the piece of work undertaken and looked forward to its further embedding within the University.

Members		
Hannah Blackburn	Student Governor (outgoing President, Students' Union)	P
Jonathan Chapman	External Member	P
Mohit Dhingra	External Member	P
Kevin Gould	External Member	P
Saima Hussain	Staff Governor (professional services staff)	A
Colin Hughes (Chair)	External Member	P
Professor Martin Jones	Vice Chancellor	P
Baljinder Kuller	External Member	P
Kim Newell Chebator	External Member	P
Juliet Oosthuysen	External Member	P (T)
Martin Jones	Vice Chancellor	P
Martin Pugh	External Member	P
Dr Simon Smith	Staff Governor (academic staff)	A
Hayden Tsang	Student Governor (outgoing Vice-President, Students' Union)	P
Sara Williams	External Member	P
Olayemi Ajiteru	Student Governor (new President, Students' Union)	P
Leonard Stuart	Student Governor (new Vice-President, Students' Union)	P
In attendance		
Ian Blachford	Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board of Governors	IA
Dr Annabel Kiernan	Pro Vice Chancellor - Education	IA
Professor Kevin Hetherington	Deputy Vice Chancellor	IA
Sally McGill	Chief Financial Officer	IA
Professor Raheel Nawaz	Pro Vice Chancellor – Digital Transformation	IA

1 MEETING MANAGEMENT	
2812	<p>Apologies for Absence were received from Saima Hussain and Simon Smith. Sara Williams was thanked for her contribution as governor, as were the outgoing Student Governors, Hannah Blackburn President, Students Union and Hayden Tsang Vice-President, Students' Union. Olayemi Ajiteru and Len Stuart were welcomed as the new Student Governors. It was noted that Vicki Sylvester has tendered her resignation from the Board of Governors due to work commitments. Ruth Smeeth has also stood down as governor. The vacancies would be considered by Nominations and Governance Committee.</p>
2813	There were no new Declarations of Interest .
2814	The Minutes of the last meeting of the Board of Governors , 19 April 2023 BG/128/01 were confirmed as a true and accurate record.
2815	<p>Matters arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minute 334 – To note that Martin Pugh had taken the role of member of the Staffordshire University Academy Trust (SUAT), following the request to governors, by e mail, arising out of the Strategy and Performance Committee. • Minute 2810 – the 'Staff make Staffs' cultural development survey had now been completed by staff with a participation rate overall of 71%. The results would be available in late summer and an update would be provided to the Board at the next appropriate meeting.
2 STRATEGIC OVERVIEW	
2816	<p>The Vice Chancellor provided an update on Strategic Developments and Organisational Performance BG/129/02, providing an update on the external environment and internal developments within the University. It was noted in the Times, Higher Education Impact Rankings 2023 released on the 1st June, this year's score of 73.3 saw the University enter the top 100 institutions for the first time ranked = 95 out of 1304 institutions.</p> <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kim Newell Chebator asked about the influence of the league tables. Kevin Hetherington explained that while the QS world ranking is important for international students. There are three influential domestic league tables, Sunday Times, Guardian and Complete University Guide for the domestic market, however, student views on which universities to select, was informed by a richer picture of information sources. • Martin Pugh asked how the University was faring given the instability of the sector against a backdrop of financial difficulties within the wider economy, noting the narrative explained by the recent OfS report. Martin Jones replied that the University's finances were relatively stable and would provide a solid base. However, moving into the next academic year, a number of areas could have a potential financial impact on the university and would need to be addressed. The lived experience of many universities was not reflected in the OfS report, as it was a summation of sector performance, where there was a wide disparity of individual positions. • Hannah Blackburn confirmed that the Student Union had responded to the OfS on the recent consultation on sexual misconduct. <p>There were no further comments, and the report was noted.</p>
2817	<p>The Police Apprenticeships Contract update BG/129/03 was introduced by Deputy Vice Chancellor, Kevin Hetherington. He updated the Committee that all three forces involved needed to agree mutually on the contract ahead of contract signing on Friday 30th June and that there were positive signs that agreement would be achieved. There were no further comments and the report was noted.</p>
2818	<p>The Update on Student Recruitment Position – Undergraduate and Postgraduate BG/129/04 was introduced by Pro Vice Chancellor Academic, Annabel Kiernan who confirmed the following position:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [REDACTED] • [REDACTED] • It was noted that within the cycle this year, higher tariff institutions had increased the number of firm acceptances at the expense of the mid tariff and low tariff institutions. This reinforced the direction of travel for the university to increase its tariff, which it had stated to implement. • This part of the cycle was now quiet as expected, with operational and marketing plans now in place for early clearing and clearing.

	<p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kevin Gould asked if the pattern of firms this cycle was likely to be a blip this year or the commencement of a longer-term trend. Annabel Kiernan advised that new strategies had been deployed by the higher tariff institutions which were significantly impacting the middle and lower tariff institutions. She advised the Board that additional marketing campaigns will be implemented to mitigate the shortfall and that these had a positive impact last year on recruitment figures. Incentives to target groups were also being considered, as this was something that was gaining ground in the cycle to address cost of living concerns. Martin Jones commented that the situation is being closely monitored to assess whether the lower figures are an adjustment in the market or an anomaly, and that further information will be available in November. This review would be part of the governor's strategic event.  Discussion ensued around the progress of the rebranding strategy and Annabel Kiernan confirmed that the marketing agency is making good progress following its initial consultations with staff. It was agreed that the Board will be provided with an intermediate update following the meeting. Furthermore, an update at the next meeting in September would be arranged and at the November strategic event. The Board noted that they were keen to be engaged in the branding project, throughout. Positioning Staffordshire University's unique offering will be an important element of the marketing mix and members discussed the need for a cultural vision for Stoke on Trent as whole. Kevin Hetherington said there was a real need for more student accommodation to be built by the private sector in Stoke and that engagement with the city council remained a priority. Sara Williams advised the Board that she had received feedback that property developers require key facts and figures on potential students' numbers to help drive this change. <p>There were no further comments subsequent updates will be provided.</p>
3 SUB-COMMITTEE BRIEFING SHEETS AND REFERRED ITEMS	
2819	<p>The content of the BRIEFING SHEET from the Nominations and Governance Committee, 9 May 2023 BG/129/05 was noted and the following matters were considered:</p> <p>For approval:</p> <p>a) Minute 672 - Term of Office Renewal Schedule/Independent Governor Update NG/60/06</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kevin Gould and Hannah Blackburn noted the lack of diversity on the Board of Governors and Ian Blachford explained that due to circumstances beyond the University's control, the ratio of male to female members had recently become less balanced and that the University is actively taking steps to redress this balance. <p>The Terms of Office Renewal Schedule was approved.</p> <p>b) Minute 675 - Membership/Composition of Sub Committees 2023-2024 NG/60/07</p> <p>The membership was approved.</p> <p>The following papers were considered for information:</p> <p>a) Minute 677 - Calendar of Meetings for 2023-24 NG/60/08</p> <p>The report was noted.</p> <p>b) Minute 678 - Appointment of Chancellor NG/60/09</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>
2820	<p>The content of the BRIEFING SHEET from the Remuneration Committee, 9 May 2023 BG/129/10 was noted and there were no referrals to Board of Governors.</p>
2821	<p>The content of the BRIEFING SHEET from the Strategy and Performance Committee, 17 May 2023 BG/129/11 was noted.</p> <p>Approval There were no items for approval.</p> <p>Information</p>

	<p>Minute 347 – KPI Scorecard BG/129/12</p> <p>The scorecard was noted.</p>
2822	<p>The content of the BRIEFING SHEET from the Sustainability and Resources Committee, 2 June 23 BG/129/13 and 13 June 2023 BG/129/14 was noted and the following matters were considered:</p> <p>For approval</p> <p>a) Minute 549 - Sustainability Update BG/129/15, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix A - ESG Framework BG/128/15a • Appendix B - Climate Change Response and Risk Management policy BG/129/15b • Appendix C - Environmental Sustainability Policy BG/129/15c • Appendix F.6 - Transport and Travel Policy BG/129/15d • Appendix F.8 - Sustainable Procurement Policy BG/129/15e • Appendix F.10 - Sustainable Consumption Food and Drink Policy BG/129/15f • Appendix F.13 - Waste Management Policy BG/129/15g • Appendix F.15 - Energy Management Policy BG/129/15h • Appendix F.17 - Water Management Policy BG/129/15i • Appendix F.21 - Biodiversity Policy BG/129/15j • Appendix F.26 - Responsible investment policy BG/129/15k <p>The Committee considered the policies and they were all approved and the following comments were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Appendix F.8, Hannah Blackburn asked that the sustainable delivery of goods and services be considered, as well as food mileage from suppliers. Hannah Blackburn requested that red tractor and RSPCA assurances both be included in Appendix F.10, not one or the other, and that both plastic and glass types of packaging are the reusable types. Sara Williams recommended BSI standards be consulted for comparison purposes. • Mohit Dhingra asked about the practicality of excluding fossil fuel companies from investments (Appendix F.26) and Sally McGill confirmed that there are sufficient alternative portfolios available to facilitate this, which had been discussed recently at the Sustainability and Resources Committee. <p>For information</p> <p>a) Minute 550 - Digital Transformation Update BG/129/16</p> <p>b) Minute 556 - Management Accounts 30th April 2023 BG/129/17</p> <p>c) Minute 565 - Cost of Living Pay Award and Industrial Action Update BG/129/18</p> <p>d) Minute 566 - National Consultation on Pay Bargaining BG/129/19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With regard to the current marking and assessment boycott, Ian Blachford confirmed that the University has successfully mitigated potential risks relating to the marking boycott, enabling all students to graduate. Mohit Dhingra asked about the likelihood of negotiations being re-opened with regard to the agreed August pay award. Ian Blachford confirmed that UCEA was holding the line that these were now concluded. A re-opening of these discussions would be difficult due to the spread of financial performance across the sector. <p>The reports were noted.</p>
2823	<p>BRIEFING SHEET - Audit and Risk Committee, 7 June 2023 BG/129/20</p> <p>Approval</p> <p>a) Minute 1940 – Internal Audit Plan 2023-2024 BG/129/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kevin Gould enquired about why the internal audit plan did not include any specific reference to the London campus. Ian Blachford confirmed that London would be included within the audits listed. Furthermore, a deep dive report would be received and discussed at the Sustainability and Resources Committee and the Board of Governors in the autumn, with further actions to be agreed with the Board thereafter. • The Internal Audit Plan was agreed together with the need to keep this under review throughout the academic year to ensure that it was focused on the key risks for the university. In addition, all members agreed to escalate risks from the sub committees to the Audit and Risk Committee, if further assurance was required. <p>b) Minute 1941 – University Level Risk Registers BG/129/22</p> <p>The risk registers were approved.</p> <p>Information</p> <p>None</p>

4 FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR APPROVAL (marked below accordingly)	
2824	None
5 FOR INFORMATION	
2825	<p>The Student Union Report BG/129/23 was introduced for discussion by Hannah Blackburn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kim Newell Chebator enquired about eligibility for cost-of-living support. Annabel Kiernan advised that an additional £250,000 has been set aside for this fund and that applications are made in writing by students for a variety of reasons. International students are not eligible since they are required to explain how they will support themselves in their original applications to gain entry to the country. However, all students could take advantage of other 'in kind' hardship approaches which had been put in place during the current academic year. • Discussion ensued as to whether the feedback received from students about their student academic experience was anticipated or unexpected. Annabel confirmed that the Executive was aware of the issues raised and there are no unresolved issues. She confirmed that this mechanism allows for high level oversight and further escalation as required, either by resolving issues locally or raising with deans and associate deans through a number of fora. <p>There were no further comments, and the report was noted.</p>
2826	<p>*Academic Board minutes: 01 Feb 2023 BG/129/24 and 29 Mar 2023* BG/129/25</p> <p>The academic board minutes were noted.</p>
6 ADDITIONAL MATTERS	
2827	<p>Any additional matters None</p>
2828	<p>Next meeting: Wednesday 20 September 2023 (Catalyst building, Leek Road)</p>